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Food Guide Pyramid: Milk, Yogurt and Cheese Group

by Harriet Kohn, Extension Nutrition Specialist

Overview

The United States Department of Agriculture's Food Guide Pyramid is a food guide for individuals over the age of two. This general nutrition guide encourages Americans to eat a variety of foods from each of the five basic food groups. Foods in each group provide important nutrients, and individuals need to eat foods from each group daily in order to get the necessary amounts of these nutrients.

This fact sheet provides a closer look at the Milk, Yogurt and Cheese Group. The Pyramid recommends getting two to three servings each day.

Fitting Milk Into Your Daily Plan

It is important to eat milk products daily to provide needed calcium, B vitamins and protein. Milk, yogurt and cheese are the best sources of calcium. Throughout the life cycle the need for calcium continues.

Ages	Recommended Number of Servings of Milk
Under 1 year	Breast milk or formula (cow's milk not recommended under one year of age).
1-2 years	2 servings whole milk because they need the fat for growth.
Ages 2-12	2 servings
Ages 13-24	3 servings
Pregnant and breastfeeding women	3 servings
Ages 25 and up	2 servings

Milk and dairy products provide fat as well as calcium and other nutrients. Most people over the age of two need to limit their fat intake while getting enough milk. The following chart shows foods from this group as well as the number of servings and grams of fat in each food listed. Read labels on food for additional nutrient information.

MILK, YOGURT, AND CHEESE GROUP

Eat 2 to 3 servings daily	Servings	Grams of fat
Skim milk, 1 cup	1	Trace
Lowfat milk, 1%, 1 cup	1	2
Lowfat milk, 2%, 1 cup	1	5
Whole milk, 1 cup	1	8
Chocolate milk, 2%, 1 cup	1	5
Nonfat yogurt, plain, 8 oz.	1	Trace
Lowfat yogurt, fruit, 8 oz.	1	3
Lowfat yogurt, fruit, 8 oz.	1	4
Cottage cheese, 1% fat, 1/2 cup	1/4	2
Cottage cheese, 4% fat, 1/2 cup	1/4	5
Ricotta, part skim, 1/2 cup	1	10
Mozzarella, part skim, 1-1/2 oz.	1	7
Natural cheddar cheese, 1-1/2 oz.	1	14
Process cheese, 2 oz.	1	18
Frozen yogurt, 1/2 cup	1/2	2
Ice milk, 1/2 cup	1/3	3
Ice Cream, 1/2 cup	1/3	7

Preventing Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis (a thinning of the bone due to loss of calcium and other minerals) can be prevented to a large extent by adequate calcium intake in childhood, teen years and early adulthood. Calcium helps to build a strong bone structure. Regular weight bearing exercise is also important to keep the minerals in the bones. Continuing adequate calcium intake and exercise habits throughout middle and the older years will help maintain strong bones. Women after the menopause should talk to their physicians about hormonal replacement therapy to maintain strong bones and prevent osteoporosis.

Lactose Intolerance

Some people cannot digest milk products containing lactose (milk sugar) because their body produces little or no lactase, an enzyme that breaks down lactose and permits it to be absorbed. People with lactose intolerance sometimes can handle small amounts of milk, yogurt, or aged cheese in a meal with

other foods. People who have a severe case of lactose intolerance may need to eliminate milk and milk products from the diet and eat other sources of calcium. Lactose reduced milk is sold in some supermarkets.

Milk Allergy

People with a milk allergy or an intolerance to milk may need to obtain their calcium from green vegetables, cooked fish with edible bones, tofu and other foods high in calcium. Calcium in tablet form may be prescribed by a physician.

Summary

Two to three servings from the Milk, Yogurt and Cheese Group are needed by everyone. Care in choosing milk products that are nonfat or low fat is important to keep fat content low in the diet.

References

United States Department of Agriculture, Human Nutrition Information Service. The Food Guide Pyramid. Home and Garden Bulletin No. 252. Washington, D.C. August 1992.

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